



*George Washington & Jefferson National Forests*  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FOREST SERVICE PLANS TO CONDUCT PRESCRIBED FIRE IN PAGE COUNTY.**

**Harrisonburg, VA** –The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, plans to treat portions of the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests in Page County with prescribed fire. The 2,800 acre Catback prescribed burn is planned for Catback Mountain on the Lee Ranger District. The burn is planned for Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday April 10<sup>th</sup>. Weather conditions should disperse smoke rapidly, but residents of surrounding areas may see and smell light smoke for several days, especially in the mornings and evenings. Prescribed burns improve wildlife habitat, promote healthy forests, and help protect communities from potentially large, high-intensity wildfires by reducing fuel accumulations, such as grass, leaves, and brush.

Human safety is the number one priority. Prescribed burns are only ignited if wind speed and direction, temperature, and humidity lie within parameters optimizing a firefighter's ability to control the fire. All personnel are highly trained, equipped, and prepared to perform effectively and safely. Firefighters use handheld drip torches and aerial ignition by helicopter to ignite the burn.

The George Washington and Jefferson National Forests are dependent on fire to remain healthy and to provide optimal habitat for a diversity of plants and animals. Wildlife populations such as white-tailed deer, black bears, turkey, quail, squirrels, eastern cottontails, and many migratory birds benefit from a forest openings and increased food and cover that flourish after a fire. Without periodic ground-level fires, shade-loving species, like red maple and white pine, outcompete oak and pine seedlings for available light and food. Without fire, a pine or oak-hickory forest becomes a different forest over time; one dominated by maples, white pines, and other species reducing critical habitat for many species.

*For more information, please contact the Lee Ranger District at 540-984-4101.*

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*The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.*